

CITIZENS for the REPUBLIC

founded by Ronald Reagan in 1977

#ProtectTheTongass



Opinion Research for Decision Making in Politics and Public Affairs

4131 Spicewood Springs Road
Suite O-2
Austin, TX 78759

Office: 512-345-9720
mikeb@baselice.com
mattg@baselice.com

February 4, 2020

TO: Citizens for the Republic
FR: Mike Baselice
RE: Alaska Voter Survey

At 49%, more voters in Alaska are opposed to exempting the entire Tongass National Forest in Alaska from the protections of the Roadless Rule than there are voters in favor of it (43%). Moreover, those strongly opposed (33%) outpace those strongly in favor (23%).

“Do you favor or oppose exempting the entire Tongass National Forest in Alaska from the protections of the Roadless Rule, which would allow more commercial logging and construction of new logging roads in these Roadless areas?” [49% oppose, 43% favor]

After respondents learned more about the proposal, 54% oppose the proposal to exempt the entire Tongass National Forest in Alaska from the protections of the Roadless Rule.

Several of the informative statements which drive opposition to the proposal, especially among Republican voters, are:

“The current national forest conservation policies are (Ver X: important / Ver Y: needed) to protect water quality, wildlife, and recreational opportunities.” [79% agree, 16% disagree]

“Our national forests belong to all of us, not large corporations and their lobbyists. We need to protect the Tongass National Forest to ensure that future generations can enjoy the freedom and peacefulness they provide, not sell them off for profit.” [74% agree, 21% disagree]

“Hunters and fishers want to keep the current rules because these rules protect the national forest for hunting and fishing on which they rely and enjoy.” [70% keep current rules, 24% change the rules]

The survey was conducted among of N=300 registered voters Alaska on January 28-29, 2020. The margin of error to the results of this survey is $\pm 5.7\%$ at the .95 confidence level. Sixty-two percent of respondents were interviewed on their cell phones and 38% were interviewed on their landline phones.

Never forget Ronald Reagan's legacy as a conservative conservationist

He would have urged caution before making decisions that affect Tongass National Forest



Tongass National Forest, Alaska Map by Greg Groesch/The Washington Times
By Craig Shirley - - Wednesday, February 12, 2020

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

The Iranian Hostage Crisis, the “War on Drugs,” the bombing of Libya, the successful invasion of Grenada, the booming economy, the restoration of American morale, and the now-famous call for Mikhail Gorbachev to “Tear down this wall!” These are just some of the historical turning points that come to mind when remembering the legacy of our 40th president of the United States, [Ronald Reagan](#). But what is often not spoken about as much, and yet perhaps of similar importance to President Reagan’s foreign policy and economic legacies, is his commitment to protecting and maintaining our great country’s natural beauty.

Reagan, both through his commitment to laissez faire principles and stemming from his love of the wide-open West, was committed to conservationist policies. His policies had their roots in limited government intervention, but they also led to environmental protections that have lasted the test of time. His unique style resulted in an administration that limited the development on millions of acres of public lands while also saving the American people billions of dollars (in keeping with his reputation for fiscal conservatism).

Reagan’s commitment to the environment is best stated by his own words:

“What is a conservative after all, but one who conserves, one who is committed to protecting and holding close the things by which we live. ... And we want to protect and conserve the land on which we live — our countryside, our rivers and mountains, our plains and meadows and forests. This is our patrimony. This is what we leave to our children. And our great moral responsibility is to leave it to them either as we found it or better than we found it.”

Reagan signed more federal wilderness bills into law than any other president since the Wilderness Act was enacted in 1964 — 43 bills that designated more than 10 million acres of wilderness areas in 27 states. Federally designated wilderness areas, passed through Congress and signed by the president, give the highest level of protection to our country’s public lands. Wilderness keeps certain areas as close to their natural, primitive states as possible and they protect some of our most critical and pristine wildlife habitats and sources of clean drinking water.

Now, at the start of our new decade, a new conservation fight looms and calls into mind what Reagan’s response might have been. What would Reagan do if he were to face the current political call from some to dismantle protections on millions of acres of wild, pristine forests in one of the country’s most important national forests?

These protections that, once gone, could lead to clear cutting and industrial logging of some of the last old-growth tree stands left in America. This would not only fill in streams with eroded dirt that could decimate local salmon populations (and the fishermen and local economies that rely upon them) but would also ignore the pleas from local indigenous tribal sovereign nations that call this area their homeland — government overreach in its most egregious form. All of this and more is exactly what is now happening in the Tongass National Forest of Alaska.

Established by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907, the Tongass National Forest is America’s largest national forest and one of the largest intact temperate rainforests in the world. Its wild lands and waters are vast enough to support biological diversity and healthy habitats for many wild species, including all five of North America’s Pacific salmon species as well as brown bears and Sitka black-tailed deer. In 2001, the most backcountry and pristine areas of the Tongass were set aside as protected by the U.S. Forest Service’s National Roadless Rule.

A highly important conservation measure, the “Roadless Rule” protects clean drinking water sources, wildlife habitat, world-class recreation, hunting and fishing opportunities across more than 50 million acres of backcountry, roadless areas in national forests across the country. The rule protects 9.5 million acres in the Tongass. Now, the state of Alaska is petitioning the federal government to remove protections on the Tongass, which could open these critically important wild areas to industrial development.

If the application of the Roadless Rule to the magnificent Tongass National Forest is eliminated and this pristine land is destroyed, there will be no bringing it back. Grim images of eroded topsoil and depleted, barren wastelands marred by harsh concrete roads are just a glimpse into the future of the wreckage such an exemption would cause.

[Reagan](#), the Westerner, who owned and loved his 600-acre ranch in California, did not like waste. And while he is no longer with us, we know from his history of protecting the environment, he would have urged caution, before decisions are made which could adversely affect the Tongass National Forest forever.

Craig Shirley, a presidential historian, is the author of four books on [Ronald Reagan](#).

OPINION EDITORIAL: RON MAXWELL, WASHINGTON EXAMINER

Keeping America great: preservation and conservation are the roots of American democracy

by Ron Maxwell

February 29, 2020 12:00 AM

At 16.7 million acres, the Tongass National Forest sprawls across the misty southeast portion of the state of Alaska, a partial temperate rainforest that ranks as the largest national forest in the United States. To quote President Trump, “It’s huuuge.”

Each of the million visitors who passes through the Tongass every year can experience all that the wooded forests and rambling rivers hold within, such as five different species of Pacific salmon, the Sitka black-tailed deer, grizzly bears, and the ultimate symbol of freedom in America, the bald eagle.

Preservation of the Tongass and its stunning natural beauty is woven into the narrative of our country’s history dating back to the early 1900s, when it became a special interest of President Teddy Roosevelt upon his inauguration. Roosevelt’s first move for the region was to establish the neighboring Alexander Archipelago Forest Reserve, which consisted of protected islands, in 1902. In 1907, the addition of the first iteration of the Tongass National Forest was designated as a federally protected forest. The following year, both the Tongass and the 1,100 islands of the Alexander Archipelago Forest Reserve were combined, encompassing most of Southeast Alaska.

Now, after over a hundred years of protection that has been upheld throughout Republican and Democratic administrations, the timeless temperate rainforest region, filled with endangered species and picturesque landscapes unique to Alaska, faces the threat of being opened up to industrial development. Many of the trees facing the chopping block are as old as 800 years. The current proposal from the Forest Service would exempt these areas from the protections of the Roadless Rule and open up a startling 9.5 million acres to activities that could include industrial timber, mining, and other extractive industries.

The exempted areas would remain under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, but would have hundreds of miles of roads added and become a target for logging and mining. Currently, the region under the U.S. Forest Service is experiencing a 15-year transition in its timber industry from old growth to new growth. By the end of this period, the existing logging projects in the area would only consist of cutting newer trees, leaving old growth to nature. But the proposal to exempt the Tongass from the Roadless Rule would offset this trend and require heavy subsidization.

In 2019, Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan budget watchdog in Washington D.C., released “Cutting Our Losses: 20 Years of Money-Losing Timber Sales in the Tongass,” which included, among many findings, an astounding calculation that originated with the [2016 report from the Government Accountability Office](#) — over the past twenty years, the U.S. Forest Service has lost nearly \$600 million through roadbuilding and timber sales on this forest.

Recreational hunting, perhaps *the* outdoor sport of America, also stands to be threatened, as the clearcutting and logging of the area would significantly alter the inviting habitat for the fair game and wildlife population that reside within. It is no surprise that the tourism and recreational hunting industry within the Tongass provides for 10,000 jobs, and brings in annually a billion dollars in revenue for the state of Alaska.

The threat of deforestation and the loss of history-rich roots loom large, compounded by the debilitating damage that the exemption would bring upon the fisheries that produce over 48 million salmon from the Tongass streams and rivers. Salmon harvested from the Tongass account for 28% of the commercial salmon harvest in Alaska, and the industry generates an additional \$986 million annually. The runoff from roads and deforestation could permanently damage the streams and waterways within the forest that Alaskan salmon travel back up when it’s time to reproduce.

All those years ago, Teddy Roosevelt prioritized conservation, and those who followed in his footsteps upheld his ideal of protecting what made America truly great; beautiful, natural land. Steeped in the history of our nation, the formation of the Tongass National Forest and the millions of acres of preserved land must be protected at all costs, to maintain our American identity and to honor those who fought for its preservation in years prior, while providing a natural retreat for millions of Americans in the years to come.

Ron Maxwell was director of the films "Gettysburg," "Copperhead," and "Gods and Generals."

OPINION EDITORIAL: PETE SEPP, Townhall.com

The Economic Futility of Allowing Logging in Tongass National Forest



Pete Sepp

Posted: Mar 21, 2020 12:01 AM

The opinions expressed by columnists are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of Townhall.com.



Source: AP Photo/U.S. Forest Service, File

Thirtymillion dollars would make anyone sit up and pay attention, especially when the words following include “the government” and “taxpayers.” But is \$30 million each year what it costs to maintain the protection of a federally designated national forest?

Surprisingly, no. This average annual loss of \$30 million stems not from protecting the forest, but *logging* the forest, Southeast Alaska’s Tongass National Forest in particular. That’s equivalent to over \$100,000 per timber job in the area.

When the current administration announced its intent to modify the protections of the “Roadless Rule” that restricts logging in over 9 million acres of the 16.7 million acre Tongass National Forest, some Americans might have cheered the move as regulatory reform. While plenty of environmental edicts are already straining the nation’s finances, rolling back the Roadless Rule could actually swell America’s bloated debt stomach, resulting in a new heaping plate of government costs.

According to [findings](#) produced by our colleagues at Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS), based in part on Government Accountability Office research, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has lost nearly \$600 million over two decades through roadbuilding and timber sales – an average of \$30 million every year. As TCS explained:

"Every year, the USFS prepares and conducts sales for the rights to harvest millions of board feet of timber from the Tongass. These sales have historically generated less revenue than the USFS spends to administer them, resulting in large net losses for U.S. taxpayers. New budget data reveal that the USFS has continued to lose millions of dollars on Tongass timber sales in recent years."

Why has this happened? Even those in the timber industry who dispute the use of the term “subsidy” to describe what’s going on acknowledge the federal government has a lot to learn about controlling forest management costs. As a leader of the Alaska Forest Association [put it](#) several years ago, “The Forest Service cost of preparing timber sales is very high compared to what the State [of Alaska] spends preparing their timber sales, but that is a management issue, not a subsidy. ...The agency does a good job growing trees; they just spend too much money.”

Writing for the Cato Institute, Randal O’Toole [put a finer point](#) on the problem by noting early on that “the more damage timber sales created the larger were the budgets that managers got to control. Every level of the agency’s hierarchy had a stake in the below-cost timber sale program because as much as a third of the funds went for agency overhead.”

Those dismal incentives are not likely to improve if more federal roadbuilding to access logging sites – which already accounts for a good 40 percent of the government’s costs – is encouraged in the Tongass. After all, Taxpayers for Common Sense projects that over the next four years, the

USFS could end up losing more than \$180 million from the *existing* timber operation. Lifting the Roadless Rule will add more than 9 million acres to the areas that could be logged, and with it the prospects for super-sized taxpayer liabilities.

Despite federal managerial shortcomings, the Tongass has provided impressive economic returns in other ways. Tourism, fishing, and hunting industries amount to 26 percent of the local economy of Southeast Alaska, far more so than timber harvesting provides. Most notably, salmon harvested from within the rivers flowing throughout the Tongass provide for 28 percent of the commercial salmon harvest across the entire state, with the Alaskan fishing industry yielding \$986 million annually. On top of all of this, the Tongass itself provides for over 10,000 jobs for Alaska residents.

Taxpayers should not oppose all logging in the Tongass; they simply deserve better federal policy than throwing good money after bad. Environmental reviews for commercial operations can be streamlined, access to existing forest roads should be rationally priced, and successful private-sector management techniques should be implemented.

Until these steps are taken, however, the Roadless Rule will have to suffice in limiting the damage to taxpayers’ wallets. For now, the benefits of maintaining an ecosystem that’s profitable for several economic sectors outweigh the costs of expanding a proven government money-loser targeted at one sector.

Pete Sepp is President of National Taxpayers Union, a nonpartisan citizen group founded in 1969 to work for lower taxes, less wasteful government spending, and taxpayer rights at all levels.

OPINION EDITORIAL: LANDON PARVIN, THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE

Trump Plan Would Unleash Big Timber on Tongass National Forest

APRIL 29, 2020

LANDON PARVIN

Never heard of the 'Roadless Rule'? It's about to be lifted, unleashing a whole lot of greed on this pristine Alaskan sanctuary.



As I write this, I am looking from my window out to Shenandoah National Park and the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. In a time of social distancing and sheltering in place, it is a great comfort to call upon the peace and sustenance the natural world can provide. It is an enduring good.

American presidents of both parties—from Teddy Roosevelt to my old boss, Ronald Reagan, to Barack Obama—have embraced this enduring good and sought to protect our country’s natural heritage.

American transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau once stated that there “are moments when all anxiety and stated toil are becalmed in the infinite leisure and repose of nature.”

This is why, now, more than ever, we must protect the federal lands so designated by generations of American leaders. We must conserve this heritage, our birthright as Americans, so that these lands will remain untouched, a sanctuary in trying times.

The largest federally protected forest in the country, the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, is facing a threat from Big Industry, especially logging, that would enable large-scale clearcutting throughout, destroying almost 10 million acres of temperate rainforest and the wildlife within.

Too often, private logging companies operating in national forests think public lands are for their own private enterprise. Somehow the ideals of freedom and free enterprise have gotten mixed up in this argument.

The Tongass has glaciers, fjords, islands and 11,000 miles of shoreline. It is a natural and national jewel.

It is home to an abundance of indigenous wildlife, including bears, wolves, Sitka black-tailed deer, northern goshawks, marbled murrelets and the largest known concentration of bald eagles. In the glistening waters surrounding the forests of the Tongass, humpback and orca whales, otters, sea lions, porpoises and all five species of Pacific salmon can be found.

Migratory birds in the hundreds of thousands—snow geese, sandhill cranes, sandpipers, plovers and other species—make their way to the Tongass.

And so do the tourists. Millions from around the world travel every year to Alaska to experience the wonders of the Tongass, yielding a multi-million-dollar tourism industry. The tourists see the value of the Tongass and of reconnecting to something so natural, so should our government.

[The proposal to lift the protections of the Roadless Rule](#) is an effort by the Trump Administration to open up logging for the timber industry. It would irreversibly devastate millions of acres of land and damage nearby water sources, destroying the interwoven habitats of animals, birds and fish.

This beacon of the natural world would be destroyed by government approval, unrestrained corporate greed and big logging. What is more, each year government subsidies from the taxpayer's wallet result in millions of dollars of economic losses, as the logging industry is propped up only to yield a 1 percent return of profit. It is not worth it.

Needless to say, America needs economic growth, but America also needs sacred lands. And, as any economist will tell you, America's national economic future is not in clearcutting pristine national forests.

There are some things more important than irresponsible corporate profits. Our refuge, our heritage, our lands.

Landon Parvin was a speechwriter for Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

OPINION EDITORIAL: CRAIG SHIRLEY & FRANK DONATELLI, NEWSMAX

Lifting Rule for Alaska Forest Would Have National Implications

The Trump administration has the opportunity to make the right choice by upholding the Roadless Rule, following in the footsteps of past Republican administrations that prioritized conservation of our country.



As the world grapples with a downward spiraling economy, gasping industries, and a populace reeling from layoffs and investment losses, the protection of a forest may not be at the top of our concerns.

However, there are reasons why it should.

Protections for some of the last pristine roadless areas of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, put in place almost two decades ago and now under threat of being removed, could become a saving grace in America's current time of uncertainty.

The Roadless Rule safeguards important old growth forests, a broad diversity of wildlife, and important recreation areas in national forests across the country including in the Tongass, America's largest national forest.

If these protections are maintained, the Tongass will continue to serve millions as it has for generations — as a natural haven to replenish our weary souls, no matter what trials we are dealt and as public land we all have access to.

However, a recent proposal by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the state of Alaska seeks to remove these protections to benefit the logging industry.

Such a proposal not only threatens thriving wildlife habitat and the natural environment, but also poses a threat to vital tourism and outdoor recreation industries that are cornerstones of Southeast Alaska's economy.

Tourists flock to the Tongass each year to experience its natural wonders.

Revenues generated by these industries account for 26% of the local income for the economy of Southeast Alaska. This significantly outpaces the timber industry, which generates only 1 percent of the revenue for the local economy.

The Tongass also supports critical habitat for the wild Alaskan salmon millions of Americans buy each year. The salmon are harvested from the waters connected to the forest and they are as profitable as they are delicious, but only as long as the forest remains healthy. The Tongass salmon industry provides for 28% of the commercial salmon harvest throughout Alaska, with annual statewide yields of \$986 million.

In the wake of the passage of the \$2.2 trillion and \$484 billion stimulus packages, it seems Americans will need every penny moving forward to regain our economic stability.

Yet, lifting the protections of the Roadless Rule will only deepen economic loss.

Recent [reports](#) highlight how the USFS reported an annual net loss of \$21.75 million from subsidization of the Tongass logging industry. Such losses are further highlighted by the [2019 report](#) from Taxpayers for Common Sense that found the USFS lost over \$600 million in the previous two decades from logging and roadbuilding, amounting to approximately \$30 million per year.

In its report, Taxpayers for Common Sense includes its projections for future economic loss and found that in the next four years, the USFS could lose more than \$180 million from the current timber operations.

However, this four-year estimation assumes the maintenance of the Roadless Rule protections, which begs the question — how much more will be lost if a staggering 9 million acres are opened for subsidized logging?

Is now the time for America to be gambling or taking risks that history shows us are money losers for the taxpaying public?

More than 11 million Americans filed for unemployment in March due to COVID-19 shutdowns. Americans simply cannot afford further job loss or wasted government dollars.

The 10,000 jobs the Tongass provides for Alaskans working in the fishing, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries would be at risk by eliminating the Roadless Rule and opening pristine areas in the forest up to industrial development.

The Trump administration has the opportunity to make the right choice by upholding the Roadless Rule, following in the footsteps of past Republican administrations that prioritized conservation of our country, ideals dating back more than 100 years ago with the inception of the U.S. Forest Service in 1901 and the 1906 Antiquities Act, both under President Theodore Roosevelt.

As we look to return to normal life after the coronavirus crisis, we are reminded of the following quote from Ronald Reagan on conservation: "Our physical health, our social happiness, and our economic well-being will be sustained only by all of us working in partnership as thoughtful, effective stewards of our natural resources."

Frank Donatelli served as an assistant for political affairs to President Reagan and as deputy chairman of the Republican National Committee during the 2008 presidential campaign of John McCain, and as the executive vice president and director at McGuire Woods Consulting.

Craig Shirley is a Ronald Reagan biographer and presidential historian. His books include, "Reagan's Revolution, The Untold Story of the Campaign That Started it All," "Rendezvous with Destiny, Ronald Reagan and the Campaign that Changed America," "Reagan Rising: The Decisive Years," and

“ Last Act: The Final Years and Emerging Legacy of Ronald Reagan.” He is also the author of the New York Times bestseller, “December, 1941” and his new 2019 book, [“Mary Ball Washington,”](#) a definitive biography of George Washington’s mother. Shirley lectures frequently at the Reagan Library and the Reagan Ranch. He has been named the First Reagan Scholar at Eureka College, Ronald Reagan’s alma mater and will teach a class this fall at the University of Virginia on Reagan. He appears regularly on Newsmax TV, Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN. For more of his reports, [Go Here Now.](#)

OPINION EDITORIAL: JAMES HOOLEY, CONSERVATIVEHQ

James Hooley: China’s raid on the Tongass National Forest chops American jobs and profits

Special to CHQ by James Hooley, President Ronald Reagan’s chief advancement, and later ran the DC office of T. Boone Pickens and Clean Energy | 6/11/2020



In 2001, the **ROADLESS RULE** protected over 9 million acres, including much of the remaining old growth in the Tongass National Forest.

World economies have been severely crippled by the coronavirus pandemic that originated in Wuhan, China. As each week passes, more and more countries have proposed and passed multi-billion dollar and trillion-dollar stimulus packages meant to bolster floundering economies.

The United States has taken the brunt of the damage with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin stating yesterday morning that the Trump administration will "seriously look" at sending another round of direct cash payments to some Americans in the fourth coronavirus relief package, in order to buoy the drowning economy. The prosperity of our nation has been brought to its knees, as a result of China’s deception surrounding the origins of the coronavirus, and their botched containment of the deadly disease.

Amidst all of the confusion and hardship, trade tensions between the U.S. and China are at an all-time high. President Trump and his administration have vocalized their disapproval of China’s response to the

coronavirus and have vowed for retaliation. Director of the United States National Economic Council [Larry Kudlow warned last week that](#), “China is making a big mistake” for the future of peaceful trade.

Considering all of these factors at play, it seems nonsensical to even consider a recent proposal put forth by the United States Forest Service and the Alaska government. The proposal intends to lift the 2001 ‘Roadless Rule’ protections against additional logging in the Tongass National Forest of Alaska. It’s nonsensical for many reasons, but mainly, because China is deeply involved in Tongass logging.

Unbeknownst to many, China is undoubtedly the largest importer of raw log exports from the Tongass National Forest. The USDA’s 2016 “[Tongass National Forest Demand: Projections for 2015 to 2030](#)” found that “the majority of southeast Alaska logs were sent to the Pacific Rim; the share of logs sent there was over 90% in both 2005 and 2011...China is by far the largest single purchaser.”

China demands the wood product to fulfill their needs, and in return, the United States supplies. And as we supply, the American taxpayer suffers.

Government watchdog organization Taxpayers for Common Sense [reported in 2019](#), in accordance with the Government Accountability Office report from 2016, that the U.S. government subsidization of the Tongass logging industry has resulted in the loss of over \$600 million taxpayer dollars in the last 20 years, at a rate of \$30 million a year.

The overwhelming majority of raw log exports are bought by Chinese markets at the expense of American profit. Moving forward with this proposal would allow for 10 million more acres in the Tongass to be opened for industrial clearcutting, with the resultant logs being bought and shipped to China, costing the United States millions in government provided subsidization.

The other industries within the protected areas of the Tongass are exponentially more profitable than clearcutting and logging. Tourism, fishing, and hunting industries make up 26 percent of the local economy of Southeast Alaska, and the Tongass itself provides for over 10,000 jobs for Alaskans. Salmon harvested from Tongass rivers account for 28 percent of the commercial salmon harvest across Alaska. The Alaskan fishing industry itself yields \$986 million annually.

Cutting down the trees of the Tongass to satiate Chinese consumption would simultaneously axe the thousands of jobs the forest provides for Alaskan residents and destroy millions of acres of American land. As of late, haven’t we done enough suffering at the hands of China?

Americans are not happy with the spread of the coronavirus that has killed family members, destroyed businesses, and left many struggling to comprehend how they will find work when the country re-opens. Now, more than ever, we need to be focusing on American economic growth and employment. To ensure future American profit, the Roadless Rule protections must be maintained. To keep it great, America must come first and not China.

OPINION EDITORIAL: ED ROLLINS, WASHINGTON TIMES

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jul/15/maintain-roadless-rule-to-protect-america-against-/>

Maintain Roadless Rule to protect America against China ravaging Tongass National Forest

President Trump and his administration have a timely and important opportunity to retaliate against the Chinese government for its deception and handling of the coronavirus pandemic that has ravaged the U.S. economy. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is on the verge of determining whether public lands are managed for the benefit of Americans or for Chinese economic interests.

Thousands of miles away from Washington, D.C., nestled in the trees of the largest federally managed forest in America lies a hidden weapon against [China](#): the maintenance of the Roadless Rule protections. The Roadless Rule, instituted in 2001, protects almost 10 million acres of the Tongass National Forest, spanning across the coasts of Southeast Alaska. But a little-known fact is that if these protections are lifted in the coming months, [China's](#) economy will be the only benefactor. The USFS is currently finalizing a proposal to expand logging in the Tongass by eliminating decades-long protections under the Roadless Rule.

[China](#) is the largest consumer of Tongass raw log exports, and drives the market demands for the production in Southeast Alaska. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which oversees the Forest Service, issued a report in 2016, "Tongass National Forest Demand: Projections for 2015 to 2030," which states that "the majority of southeast Alaska logs were sent to the Pacific Rim" region, ([China](#), Japan and Korea), and that "the share of logs sent there was over 90% in both 2005 and 2011." For Tongass logs, the USDA reports that "[China](#) is by far the largest single purchaser," with an additional April 2020 USFS analysis indicating that "Alaska timber market conditions are driven by log exports to [China](#)."

Chinese consumption of Tongass timber drives the market demand of an industry that does nothing to bolster the U.S. economy. In fact, Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS) found in 2019 that U.S. taxpayers subsidize logging in the Tongass to the tune of \$30 million a year. According to TCS, our government has wasted more than \$600 million of taxpayer dollars on subsidization of the Tongass in the past 20 years. When you break it down at the simplest level, American taxpayers are paying for the economic benefits of [China](#) — and they aren't happy about it. And the Forest Service proposal to drop roadless area protections on the Tongass will only exacerbate the problem.

A June 2020 national poll conducted by Washington, D.C.-based polling firm The Winston Group surveyed 1,000 registered voters on the issue of lifting the Roadless Rule protections and the implications associated with the proposal. The Winston Group discovered that the

large plurality of American voters (41%) support maintaining the Roadless Rule protections upon learning that “the proposal would open these lands to commercial logging by the timber industry, which is heavily subsidized by the American taxpayer, and whose biggest customer is [China](#).”

Those surveyed who voiced support for exempting the Tongass National Forest from the protections of the Roadless Rule regardless of [China](#)’s involvement and economic profit formed a much smaller minority, at just 25%. Decisively, 65% more American voters see further trade involvement through expanded logging on the Tongass to benefit [China](#) as a threat to our nation.

This is the time to act — to take preventative measures to ensure that [China](#) cannot further destroy the old growth forests and world-class salmon habitat of the Tongass, which when protected generates incredible revenue for the state of Alaska. The Alaska fishing industry yields on average \$986 million annually, with 28% of commercial salmon harvested from the waters of rivers within the Tongass. Recreational sports, such as hunting and fishing, on top of the thriving tourism industry within the Tongass, also contribute to Alaska’s economy, employing over 10,000 Alaska residents a year.

The China-originated coronavirus has already done irreparable damage to our once prosperous nation. American voters agree that we cannot continue to allow [China](#) to ravage our markets, nor our land — and so should our government. President Trump can get it right here by upholding these important protections for our forest, and for our economy.

• *Ed Rollins, longtime Republican campaign consultant and adviser, was the National Campaign Director for the successful Reagan-Bush 1984 campaign and is currently the chairman of the pro–Donald Trump Great America PAC.*

MEDIA COVERAGE:

Radio: *The Schilling Show with host Rob Schilling, WINA*

March 5, 2020

<https://soundcloud.com/1070wina/the-schilling-show-3520-hour-1-matt-langston-ron-maxwell>

Radio: *Richmond’s Morning News with John Reid, WRVA*

March 6, 2020

<https://newsradiowrva.radio.com/media/audio-channel/ron-maxwell-mar-6-2020>

Print: *Alaska Native News*, “Statewide Alaska Poll Finds Republican Hunters and Fishers Support Roadless Rule”

February 18, 2020

<https://alaska-native-news.com/statewide-alaska-poll-finds-republican-hunters-and-fishers-support-roadless-rule/47529/>

Print: *Alaska Native News*, “Keeping America great: preservation and conservation are the roots of American democracy”

March 4, 2020

<https://alaska-native-news.com/keeping-america-great-preservation-and-conservation-are-the-roots-of-american-democracy/47909/>

Print: *The Washington Times*, “Inside the Beltway”

March 4, 2020

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/mar/4/inside-the-beltway-joe-frenzy-media-ready-to-shine/>

Online: *E&E News*, “Money-Loser: Conservative group blasts Trump Tongass Rule”

April 2, 2020

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1062769185>

Online: *Earth.com*, “Trump’s plan would “irreversibly devastate” the Tongass National Forest”

April 29, 2020

<https://www.earth.com/news/trumps-plan-would-irreversibly-devastate-the-tongass-national-forest/>

Online: *DailyCaller.com*, “The USDA Is Considering Lifting Alaskan ‘Roadless Rule,’ Which Could Generate Millions for China’s Economy”

May 29, 2020

<https://dailycaller.com/2020/05/29/usda-alaska-roadless-rule-china-economy-trade-logging/>

Online: *The Washington Examiner*, “There's literally no downside': Reagan-founded PAC pushes Trump to preserve Alaska's Tongass Forest”

June 28th, 2020

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/theres-literally-no-downside-reagan-founded-pac-pushes-trump-to-preserve-alaskas-tongass-forest>

Online: *The Washington Examiner*, Daily on Energy, “**REAGAN-FOUNDED POLITICAL GROUP AIMS TO SAVE THE TONGASS**”

June 29th, 2020

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/daily-on-energy-supreme-court-punts-on-major-natural-gas-pipeline>

Online: FloridaPolitics “The morning read of what’s hot in Florida politics”

July 15th, 2020

<https://floridapolitics.com/archives/348371-sunburn-the-morning-read-of-whats-hot-in-florida-politics-7-15-20>
